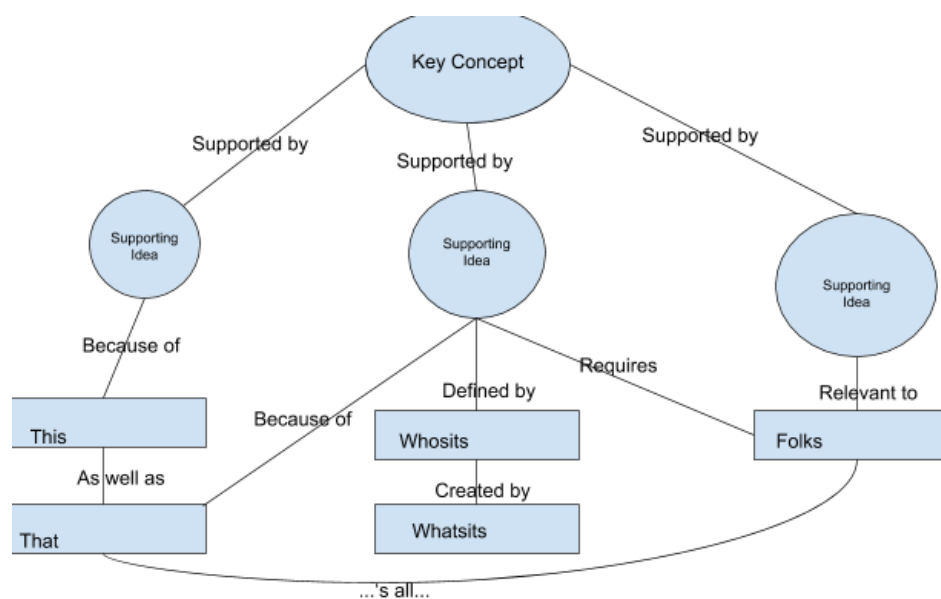


## Concept Mapping at the Montana Historical Society: Why and How

The informal learning environment of a museum allows for exploration and the spark of independent interest in visitors. This interest can help to expand visiting student's understanding of a topic. As modern research points out, a student's understanding is not an "all or nothing" proposition, "but rather a growing set of propositional linkages between the concept of central concern and other related concepts" (Novak, 94). As such, a tool which allows students to demonstrate their understanding on a conceptual level would be useful for an educator wishing to assess their students after a museum visit. A teacher could use concept mapping as just such an assessment tool. It allows for the creation of a quick visual representation for teachers to assess their learners' conceptual frameworks, and how they have (or have not) grown.

To do this, students will need a pen and a piece of paper. The idea of a concept map is to create a visual depiction of how ideas and facts connect. Students start with a circle around a key idea. From there they draw a hierarchy of connections to other ideas or facts that relate to the main idea. Along the connecting lines students should write a word or phrase that describes what the connection is between the key idea and the detail. If students are unfamiliar with concept mapping it may be of benefit to do one as a class to model their creation. This could be on a topic that you have addressed in class or something that the students all have a working knowledge of.



To see what your students have taken away from their visit to the museum, have them do a concept map both before and after the visit, then compare the two. It will give you a quick visual way to assess any learning or conceptual growth without longer written work!

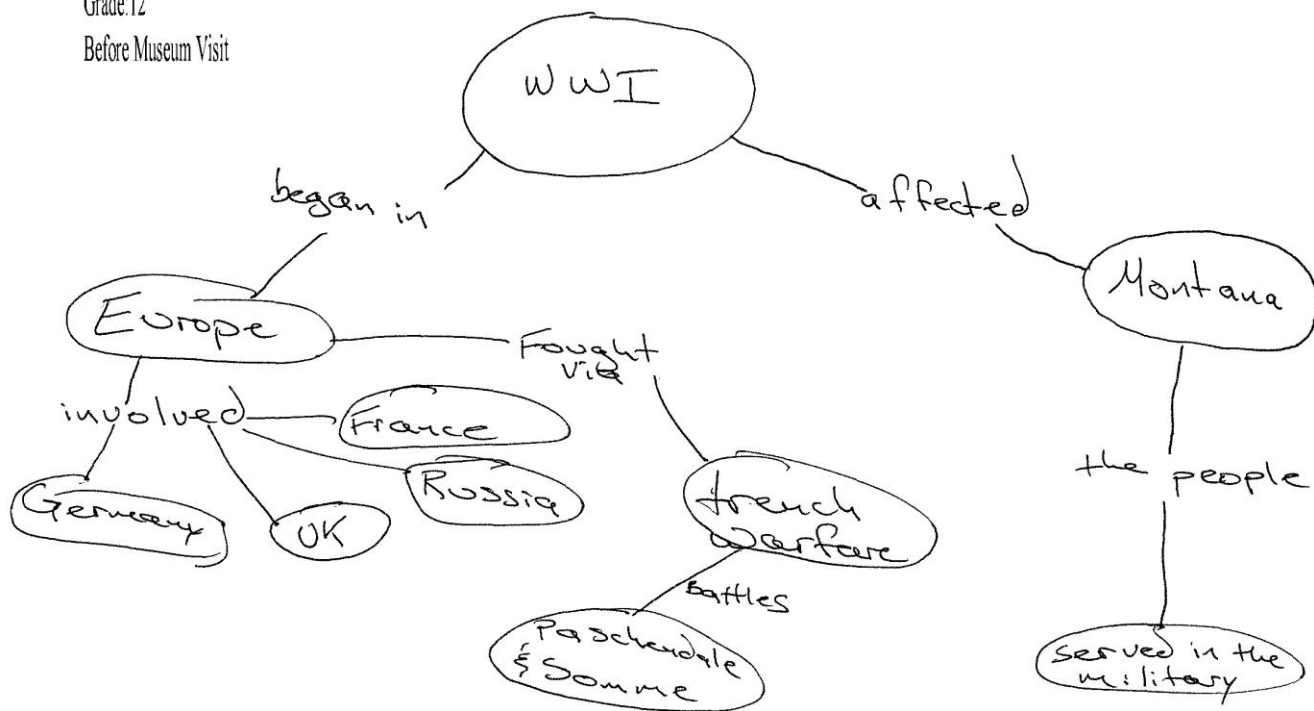
To sum up:

1. Do a concept map as a class with a topic students know.
2. Have students create concept maps about the museum exhibit before visiting.
3. Visit the exhibit.
4. Create a concept map about the exhibit again to demonstrate their learning.

Novak, Joseph D. and D. Bob Gowin. Learning How to Learn. Book. Cambridge University Press, 2002.  
Grade 12 Concept Map (Before Museum Visit)

Sample

Grade: 12  
Before Museum Visit



(See next page for the Post Museum Visit concept map)

After Museum Visit

